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On October 7, 2024, I died. I lay on the floor in my hallway outside of my bathroom as I internally bled out into my stomach. I have vague memories of talking to Sheila and then being carried out of the apartment, but other than that I have no actual recollection of things until two weeks later.

I did not see any bright lights. I was not visited by angels. I did not get a glimpse into heaven. There was no grand pronouncement. Just peace.

Of course, as I stand here before you today, you know that the medical technicians in the ambulance were able to get me somewhat stabilized and were able to rapidly get me to the hospital where I received blood transfusions. That Monday, the surgeons found and stopped the bleeding. Then, on Wednesday, I again came near to death when a new and life-threatening complication occurred. I was taken to emergency surgery on Wednesday but they were unable to complete the surgery until my condition stabilized. On Saturday, they finished the surgery and I began the long process of recovery.

We had friends come over on Saturday, the 5th. I had an unexplained sweating spell and also felt faint twice within 30 minutes. We decided to go to the emergency room. There, the doctors ran tests for a heart attack, since those were the symptoms that I had. All the tests came back negative, so I was released on Sunday morning. Sheila tells me that throughout that Sunday I had symptoms of what we thought was severe food poisoning.

Going into Monday morning, at about 1 in the morning, I had the distinct urge to go to the toilet. I got up out of bed as quickly as I could and stumbled my way into the hallway with Sheila in front of me. She thought that I had not yet gotten my balance because I was weak from being sick all day and I was in such a hurry. In fact, I never had my balance. I lost consciousness and fell to the floor and Sheila was able to partially catch me and keep my head from bouncing off the ceramic tiles. I told her that I really needed to go to the toilet, so she helped me up and got me to the toilet where I promptly fainted again.

Sheila called the emergency services, and the ambulance arrived fast. They were inside our apartment and had me on a stretcher within 10 minutes. I don't remember any of this. I was unconscious. Apparently, they took me to one ER and then determined that I needed to be at the digestive speciality unit at Saint Eloi.

In hindsight, we can see God's hand throughout this entire adventure. I'll share just two of those miraculous things. First, Sheila and I were supposed to be on a flight to Kenya on Wednesday the 9th. The first miracle is that this crisis happened here, at home, where we have the amazing French medical system, our health insurance, and you, our church family, to love and support us. If I had bled out 5 days later, we would have been in a remote region of Kenya and unable to get to medical care in time. Second, I got out of bed. If I hadn't had that urge to go to the toilet, I would have fallen asleep and bled out internally, without Sheila even knowing something was seriously wrong. And, it turns out, even with the fall and the loss of consciousness, I didn't actually need to go . . . I believe that was God intervening to get me out of that bed so that I could pass out, causing Sheila to call the emergency services, which saved my life.

Death is not something that we often talk about as Christians except during the Easter Season and at funerals. Death has a sinister reputation, and for good reason, so we tend to avoid speaking about it. Yet, for a believer, death is not a subject that we should avoid. We shouldn't focus on it all the time, but today we will focus on it.

My experience did not change my view of death. My experience did not change my view of life. My experience did not change the way I live my life. Why? Because I know that I have eternal life because of the death of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. Over the recent holidays, I met a new couple at a friend's home. When they were told about my death/near-death experience, the man said, "I bet that you are very happy to be celebrating this Christmas this year." To which I replied, "I actually think that I would be much happier celebrating it with my Lord." My wife didn't particularly like that answer, but it is the truth! Paul reiterates this in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8.

[1](#) For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. [2](#) Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, [3](#) because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. [4](#) For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. [5](#) Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

[6](#) Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. [7](#) For we live by faith, not by sight. [8](#) We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

I used the verb "reiterated" because Jesus tells us this in the Gospel of John chapter 14:

[1](#) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. [2](#) My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? [3](#) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. [4](#) You know the way to the place where I am going." [5](#) Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" [6](#) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [7](#) If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

So, I stand assured, just as Paul was convinced as he wrote to his disciple Timothy: 2 Timothy 1:8-12

[8](#) So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. [9](#) He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, [10](#) but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. [11](#) And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. [12](#) That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

So, how should a Believer deal with death? Avoiding talking about it is not a way to deal with it. Being fearful and in angst that you are going to die is not a way to deal with it. Death is a reality of this world (Hebrews 9:27-28). Only two people that I know of have escaped death – Enoch (Genesis 5:23) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-12). Every other person will die (or be witnesses to the Second Coming). I think one of the reasons that Christians don't often talk of death is because of its association with sin. Death entered the world as part of the consequence of Adam and Eve disobeying God. Genesis 3:19 tells us what God said to Adam and Eve after the fall:

19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Paul emphasizes this in his letter to the churches in Rome, Romans 5:12;

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

But the remedy for both sin and death was provided in Jesus Christ, Romans 5:21;

21 just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So, we have this negative reaction to death because of its association with sin. Our human, egoistic self wants to think that we can and will forever. Every day there seem to be more and more advertisements for medical advancements and other less scientific ways of “extending your life” since, apparently, the goal is to live as long as possible. But, As believers, we know that God is in control and our days are limited: In Job 15:4, we read:

5 A person's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.

As believers, our days are not our own. We have been bought with a price and we are the Lord's. Romans 14:8-9 says:

8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

So, why do we worry about death? Why do we feel angst about death? For a believer, the dropping of the material body and the taking up the spiritual body should be a time of celebration. Even before my father passed away in 2017, my mother was not in very good health. After his death she declined to the point where she could not live alone. My sister and her husband took her into their home. She was still relatively independent, but the grief of losing her husband of over 62 years weighed on her. As she continued to get older, she definitely took on the attitude of praise for God giving her the grace to live among loved ones and making new friends. Each time Sheila and I went back to Texas in the past 7 years, my mom and I would talk about death and being prepared for it. As a believer, my mom was ready for when her time came. She and I spent hours looking through old photographs and talking about the friends and family who had long passed on who were already rejoicing in heaven. Each time I left to return to Montpellier, I would tell my mom that if she were called to her heavenly reward to not fight it. I assured her that I would know where to find her when my time came to claim the promises of our Savior.

My mother passed away in May of 2024. I got to spend several hours with her before her death, but she was already more in heaven than she was with us here.

Death brings grief, naturally. We grieve for ourselves, those of us who are left behind when a loved one dies. We grieve for the loss of hearing that voice, receiving hugs, and just enjoying the company of the person who is gone. A funeral or memorial service is for those who are left behind. We share memories, photographs, and experiences to commemorate the life of the one who has passed on. If the deceased is a believer, the time should also be spent in celebration knowing that that person is now fully whole and experiencing the fullness of joy, happiness, and love in the presence of God.

For many, a near-death experience becomes a turning point in their life, especially if they have any regrets or unrequited desires to accomplish things. From a very young age, I have never felt that I am missing out on things if I die. I don't seek out death, but I am also not afraid of death. Death has already been conquered by my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In fully and truly trusting in Him, I have no fear, because I know that it is only a transition and not the end.

I did not become a believer because I feared an eternity in hell. I became a believer at the age of 7 because I knew that left to my own desires and wants, I would not and could not ever have a real, authentic relationship with God. I had stolen a little green ball sponge from a neighbor of my grandmother's when we were playing at his house. I knew it was wrong when I took it. I knew that I had disobeyed God. I talked to my grandmother and that night I asked Jesus to be the Lord and Savior of my life. At 7 years old, I dedicated my life to him. After that, I spent years learning and understanding what my declaration meant as I grew up.

I know that many of you had questions about death and dying from the believers' point of view during my hospitalization. I praise God that even without me doing anything, He used me to incite discussions about death in the life of believers. Yes, I'm relatively young. Yes, I was relatively healthy. Yes, it was a surprise to everyone. Just because you're a believer does not mean that you're immune or inoculated from the consequences of sin entering the world. We live in a world that was broken because humans decided that they knew what was best for them. The "I" or the "me" was placed before God. This is still an issue today. Where humans think that their opinion matters more than what God decrees. Their personal "truth" is just as valid as The Truth.

Death will come for us all (unless we are fortunate enough to see Jesus break through the sky). But, death is just a part of life, not a terminus. Paul states it like this, quoting from both Isaiah and Hosea in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

Death has been defeated by Jesus Christ. For the believer, it is the release from this mortal, physical world and the doorway to an eternity of being in the presence of God. Paul concludes this portion of his letter to the Corinthians with these insights and encouragement, 1 Corinthians 15:56-58:

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and

sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

For me nothing has changed in my relationship with God or others because, as we read in 2 Timothy 1:8: I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

My unwavering faith in Jesus Christ and what He has done for me is the center of who I am. I find my value in how He found me worth coming to save. All that to say, live each day to the fullest! You never know when the last sands of your hourglass will run out. Have no regrets. Tell no lies. Love freely. And most importantly, if you are a believer, allow the Holy Spirit to guide and direct you so that you are living and embodying the principles of the Kingdom of God.

